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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method for producing a synchronized population of conifer somatic embryos, the method comprising:

(a) cultivating pre-cotyledonary conifer embryogenic cells in, or on a maintenance medium comprising nutrients that sustain the embryos and one or more agents for adjusting the osmolality of the medium to a desired range;

[[a)] (b) cultivating the pre-cotyledonary conifer embryogenic cells from step (a) for a period of at least 0.5 week in, or on, a synchronization medium that comprises an absorbent composition and at least one synchronization agent selected from the group consisting of abscisic acid and a gibberellin, wherein the absorbent composition and the at least one synchronization agent are present at a concentration effective to produce a synchronized population of pre-cotyledonary conifer somatic embryos wherein at least 50% of the embryos in the synchronized population are at the same developmental stage; and

[[b)] (c) transferring the synchronized population of pre-cotyledonary conifer somatic embryos from step (b) to a development medium for synchronized cotyledonary embryo development.

2. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein the absorbent composition is selected from the group consisting of activated charcoal, soluble poly(vinyl pyrrolidone), insoluble poly(vinyl pyrrolidone), activated alumina, and silica gel.

3. (Original) The method of Claim 2 wherein the absorbent composition is activated charcoal.

4. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein the concentration of the absorbent composition in the synchronization medium is from about 0.5 g/L to about 50 g/L.

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